

A Second Chance  
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On December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2006 I went for a run with my dog, Tasman, just outside of Moab, Utah. About an hour into my run I was hiking up a small canyon to connect to a jeep trail and complete my loop. I was almost to the top when my foot hit some black ice. The ice pulled my feet out from under me and next thing I knew I was sliding straight down an icy rock face. I continued to gain speed until I hit a ledge about 50 or 60 feet below.

I wasn't dead. I touched my legs; I could feel them and knew I wasn't paralyzed. I tried to stand up. No luck. I had messed myself up—something was broken, I wasn't sure what, but I couldn't support my weight. I knew I had to get out of that canyon. With endorphins and adrenaline in force I dragged myself back down to the bottom of the canyon. The pain was excruciating. My screams of pain echoed through the little canyon. I dragged myself for 5 hours, making it a ¼ mile. It was dark, I couldn't see where I was going, and my hands were frostbitten. My arm landed on some ice and broke through soaking my shirt. I lowered my mouth down and drank from the puddle. The water from the puddle was to become my life blood. I dragged myself a little further and looked down the edge of a rock; about a four foot drop. It wasn't the route. I lie on my back on the rock face and put my hands between my legs to warm them. Confused, scared, and frustrated I decided to stay the night and continue my efforts to drag myself out of there at first light.

It was a long cold night. The shooting stars would have been beautiful if I was there by choice—this wasn't my choice. I wanted to be at home in my warm bed. It was cold, in the 20's. I moved my head up and down in a 'crunch' motion. I tapped my feet. I rubbed my hands together. I did this for 14 hours, being careful not to fall asleep and freeze to death. My dog Taz cuddled up next to me providing some warmth. At first light I tried to get into position to continue dragging myself out of the canyon. Even the slightest motion brought unbearable pain. A pain so bad I can't describe. The endorphins and adrenaline had worn off. I tried to move, then recovered from the pain, then tried again, then recovered again. I tried for several hours-- frustrated and in agony. I listened for any sound of life and screamed for help. I kept hoping someone would hear me or someone would come up the canyon. No one came. I would face another night in the canyon.

The second night seemed even longer and colder. The stars were not stars but stripes in the sky. I thought about my family, my friends, my life. I thought about a lot of stuff that night-- I was a changed person. I didn't want to die. I couldn't die. I had to fight. At that moment, life had a new meaning to me and a new-found respect. I had to stick around. A ball of blood had formed around my midsection. I was loosing a lot of blood internally. I continued to tap my feet, rub my hands together and do little crunches for another 14+ hours—careful not to fall asleep. Taz knew something was really wrong by now. I told him I loved him and asked him to go get help. He's 'just' a dog, but I was desperate for help, I would try anything I could. At first light I tried again to move—and

with the most terrible pain I've ever experienced I rolled over face down. I got the courage and energy up to use my arms to drag myself. I tried to get up and over a little ledge to get back on the route. No way could I make it. I tried to take a lower route. I was able to drag myself about four feet and ended up in a pothole atop that same four foot rock ledge I was at before. I would hurt myself worse if I dropped myself down there, and still wouldn't be able to drag myself out of that canyon before I died (it would have taken several days of dragging at the rate I was going.) The next three hours I spent dragging myself back out of the little hole I was in and back onto the place next to the little hole with the water in it. I hadn't peed for two days, but the pee drained out onto my pants during my effort. The wet on my pants would chill me soon. Screams of pain echoed in the canyon as I desperately moved myself from the precarious place where I was stuck.

Someone would have to find me. I knew I couldn't get out of the canyon on my own. I lay on my back in recovery from the effort, hyperventilating and seeing only a poster of black spots out of my eyes. "Please, someone notice that I'm missing," I thought. Two days ago I told my friend I would call him back in a couple hours after my run. At my house I had left my blinds open and lights on, my computer was on the coffee table powered on, and the screen door propped open so Taz could use the doggie door. I hoped my neighbor Dorothy would notice I hadn't come home. My truck was left parked at the start of the trail, still. My message machine must be full, I never let it fill. "Someone please notice I'm missing, please help!" I yelled out loud this time. I was scared. I was going to die and I was more scared than I've ever been. The pictures of my family and friends were vivid in my mind and I didn't want to lose them by dying. I wanted to continue experience whatever life had in store for me—good or bad, exciting or boring. I didn't need the answer to what happens to us after death yet. I had a lot more answers about life to seek and explore first. The next two hours I laid there preparing myself for death. I heard a sound overhead and the hint of hope that it might be a helicopter looking for me gave me a brief spark of energy, but the sound left and no helicopter.

Taz had been running up and down the canyon, returning to check on me every so often. At first I smiled when he would return to check on me and lick my face. This time I cried. He had brought so much joy and laughter to my life since I rescued him three years ago. He's been my pal through thick and thin almost every moment of every day other than an occasional trip to a race. That was about to end. I would die and never see him again. Or my parents, my sister, my friends. I wanted so bad to tell them how much I love them and how much they mean to me. "Oh please, someone, please, help" I yelled again and again. I had met a nice guy just the week before I left for Moab. We seemed to click right off the bat and I was excited see him again. The hope of that kind of special relationship brought happiness to me. That would not happen. I was going to die. I thought of the places I'd been, the places I wanted to go. I thought about a lot; about enjoying the little things like sound of bird, a cup of coffee at sunrise, a beer after a bike ride, sharing stories around the campfire, hugging my teammates after a race, and relaxing in bed after another good day. Never again would I experience these things.

Depression hit me hard. The warmth of the sun on my body was a relief from the cold and shivering of the long night. The fatigue was overwhelming; I had been awake for over 60 hours. I lay there and took some deep breaths. Perhaps, I thought, I should fall asleep and die before the cold of the night made for a more painful death? I cried.

Taz returned again. He was wagging his tail and started licking the river of tears that were running down my cheeks. An airplane was overhead and I raised my arms in case, by chance, whoever it was might see me. The airplane circled and returned. This time lower. It circled again. Then I heard the sound of an engine. What? Is this for real? Hha, my heart skipped a beat and my breath stopped for a moment. Yes? It could be? I resided in my head what I needed to say—I was losing my mind, but I knew this might be my chance to live and I need to make sure this person would hear me and help me. The sound got closer and closer. The spark of hope awakened my body and mind and I was fully alert again. The sound stopped just below me, at the base of that rock ledge that I debated dropping myself down. Words of desperation came from my mouth as I begged and begged for help.

“I’m here for you,” he said. I cried in relief and joy. Bego was his name. He rode his ATV to the flat rock next to where I had been laying for 52 hours. He approached and I said “I’m so glad to see you.” “I’m so glad to see you” he returned. Tears came down both our eyes this time. Taz wagged his tail and sounded a whimpering cry of joy as he licked Bego’s hand. Soon enough I was wrapped in a warm sleeping bag and four other wonderful and kind members of the Grand County Search and Rescue arrived to help. Minutes later, just before dark, the helicopter found a landing spot.

I was given a second chance for life.